

Redistricting and Voting Rights Data Office

Discussant Presentation

Dr. Karthick Ramakrishnan and Dr. James Tucker

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- **Bureau staff and cooperating States should be applauded for their partnership in the Voting District Project (VDP)**
 - ✓ In previous decennial Census operations, it was commonplace for Census Block geography to not match up with voting precincts used by states for elections
 - ✓ The differences in boundaries between voting precincts and Census Blocks often resulted in Census Blocks being split between districts in redistricting
 - Required expert testimony to estimate population and demographic characteristics
 - Resulted in less accuracy and promoted confusion in the redistricting process
 - Complicated the use of precinct-level political data for Racially Polarized Voting (RPV) analysis, which relies on Census demographic characteristics

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- **Discussant questions about the Voting District Project (VDP)**
 - ✓ Why have the handful of remaining states declined to participate in the VDP? In what ways, if any, are their reasons for not participating being addressed?
 - ✓ How can we achieve 100 percent participation of the states and territories so that all voting district boundaries correlate with Census geography in 2030?
 - Better communicate the incentives for participation?
 - Is it a resource issue?
 - Should the VDP start earlier in the decade to prepare for the 2030 Census?
 - ✓ Will the Bureau be conducting an evaluation of the VDP following the release of 2020 Census data?

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- **The release of the Geographic Support Products was very smooth**
 - ✓ Excellent communication by the Bureau about the release schedule for each set of state products
 - ✓ Supporting technical documentation for the shapefiles is easy to understand
 - ✓ We appreciate the inclusion of the Block to Block Relationship Files, which facilitate a comparison between the 2010 and 2020 Census Block level geography
 - ✓ We have not heard of any concerns about this first set of 2020 Census data products

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- **We applaud the Bureau for its planned release of the P.L. 94-171 Legacy Format Summary Files, but note there has been some confusion about it**
 - ✓ Some data users have expressed confusion about whether the Legacy Files include the same data as the “official” P.L. 94-171 release in late September
 - ✓ We now understand that the Legacy Files include the P.L. 94-171 data, but are not in as much of a “user-friendly” format
 - ✓ The format will not be an issue for data users using GIS mapping software in which the data already has been formatted for use by the general public
 - ✓ Much of the confusion appears to be the result of messaging and the reference to the files as “Legacy” data
 - ✓ There is also concern that the Legacy Files may be delayed; utmost priority should be given to ensure that the files are available by August 16 (if not earlier)

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- **Discussant questions about the P.L. 94-171 Legacy Format Summary Files**
 - ✓ In what ways have the Legacy Format Summary Files been improved from previous releases of P.L. 94-171 redistricting data?
 - ✓ Can the Census Bureau improve and more widely disseminate messaging that the “Legacy” files include the same data as the official P.L. 94-171 release, taking into account that the reference to “Legacy” has added to some of the confusion?
 - ✓ Is it possible to create a video with technical guidance to walk data users through the “Legacy” files and how to format those files for general use?

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- **Discussant questions about application of Differential Privacy (DP) to the P.L. 94-171 redistricting data**
 - ✓ What is the Bureau's cutoff for making a final decision on application of DP to the redistricting data, including the algorithm and associated Privacy Loss Budget, to meet the September 30, 2021 date for releasing the P.L. 94-171 data?
 - ✓ What is the Bureau using as its criteria to determine that data is "accurate enough" to meet priority use cases for the redistricting data, especially for small populations?
 - ✓ If a federal court issues an order directing the Census Bureau not to apply DP to the P.L. 94-171 redistricting data:
 - How will that impact the Bureau's scheduled September 30, 2021 release date for the data?
 - How much time would it add to the data processing if an alternative form of disclosure avoidance is used instead of DP?

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- **Discussant questions about application of Differential Privacy (DP) to the P.L. 94-171 redistricting data**
 - ✓ How would application of alternative methods of disclosure avoidance, such as swapping or suppression, impact the redistricting data?
 - Would total population be available with suppression?
 - Would demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity and age be suppressed?
 - ✓ Would these alternative methods of protecting privacy result in less accurate redistricting data than under DP using the PLB in the April 28, 2021 PPMF release?
 - How would that impact voting rights enforcement?

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- **Discussant questions about the release of redistricting data by September 30, 2021**
 - ✓ Do you foresee any possibility of being able to release the redistricting data any earlier?
 - Would the provision of additional resources expedite the availability of redistricting data?
 - ✓ In addition to the availability of third-party tools to help communities work with redistricting data to identify communities of interest, how has the Census Bureau improved the user interface and user experience of its own data and mapping tools with respect to redistricting data?

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